

WALT DISNEY'S

Old Yeller



A BIG GOLDEN BOOK







WALT DISNEY'S **Old Yeller**

Based on OLD YELLER, by Fred Gipson

Published by HARPER & BROS.

Told by WILLIS LINDQUIST

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When Old Yeller chased a rabbit into the corn patch that day, he was just about the most unwelcome stray dog on the Texas frontier.

Young Travis Coates had never seen the dog before. He was busy plowing corn when the rabbit and the dog suddenly came out of nowhere and ran right under the legs of his mule. The frightened mule gave a leap and took off at a gallop.

Travis yelled. The stray dog began chasing after the mule, and the dragging plow hit a corner of the rail fence. Crash went the fence, rails flying in all directions. Travis picked up some stones and chased the trouble-making old dog until it ran off in the woods.

Travis never expected to see the dog again—but he was wrong. When he went out to cut down some middling meat for breakfast the next morning, the meat had all disappeared. Old Yeller stood only a few feet away, wagging his tail. His stomach was so big he could hardly move.

“Why you thieving old rascal!” cried Travis.

He picked up a hoe. But before he could chase the dog, it rolled over on the ground and began howling. His small brother Arliss came rushing out of the cabin.

“A dog! A dog!” cried the little boy. He ran over to Old Yeller and began hugging and petting it as if it were the most wonderful dog in the world.





"He's my dog!" shouted Arliss. "And nobody's goin' to hurt him."

Their mother laughed from the doorway. "Well," she said, "it looks like we got us a dog."

Travis looked at her in surprise. "It was him that stole our middling meat!"

"I know," she said. "But with your Papa driving them cattle all the way up to the railroad in Kansas, you have to be the man of the family all summer. And you'll be needing a dog to help you look after things."



Travis felt sure the dog would just cause more trouble. Now there was no meat left for them to eat, and that meant he had to go hunting again right after breakfast.

But he had good luck. He shot a deer near a water hole, and he felt pretty good about it. Then, on the way home, he saw Arliss and Old Yeller playing in the pool of spring water. That made him angry all over again.

"Arliss!" he yelled. "Get that dirty old dog out of our drinking water!"

He threw a few stones to chase them away, for by now he was beginning to hate the sight of the stray yellow dog. But Old Yeller was not so easy to get rid of. The dog was right there watching when Travis hung up the deer meat.

"You touch a bite of this meat and it'll be the end of you," Travis warned.

He hung the meat still lower, hoping the dog would steal it during the night so he'd have a good excuse for shooting the troublesome stray.

At dawn the next morning Travis caught up his rifle and hurried out. Old Yeller greeted him with a wagging tail.

Travis turned and stared at the deer meat. It was all there! The old dog had been too smart to take it.



Later that day Travis and his mother were cutting fence poles in the woods when they heard the screams of a small animal. Travis ran to the edge of the gully and looked down. Below the steep bank, Arliss was hanging on to the hind leg of a screaming bear cub.

"Turn it loose!" yelled Travis, just as the mother bear came crashing out of the brush. Arliss saw her coming, but he was too frightened to let go of her cub.

Travis and his mother started down the steep bank. But even then Travis knew he was going to be too late.





The angry mother bear had almost reached Arliss when Old Yeller suddenly flashed out of the brush. He ripped at her side, and she turned with a snarl to fight him off.

Travis jerked Arliss away from the cub and swung him into his mother's arms. Raising his ax above his head, he rushed at the fighting beasts. The mother bear suddenly turned tail and ran off, with the cub at her heels.

Travis was glad to see that Old Yeller was unhurt and just as frisky as ever. He gave the dog a pat on the head.

"Crazy old fool," he said with a smile. "You're a heap better dog than I had you figured for."

A few days after Arliss was rescued, Bud Searcy and his granddaughter, Lisbeth, dropped in for a neighborly visit. Lisbeth had brought her dog, Miss Prissy. When it was getting on toward dinner time, Travis and Lisbeth went to the corn patch to pick some roasting ears.

"Look how the coons have been eating our corn!" said Travis. "I'll get Old Yeller after them rascals."

"Old Yeller?" she asked. "You mean that old stray dog?"

"Sure. Don't you think he can do it?"

"It ain't that. He used to hang around our place a lot before he came here. Him and Miss Prissy are going to have puppies."





That very night Travis took a cowhide to the corn patch and made a bed for himself and Old Yeller.

"We're staying right here to guard the corn from them coons," he told the dog.

A full moon came up. Owls hooted. Somewhere in the distance a wolf howled. Suddenly coons began yapping on the other side of the patch.

Travis and Old Yeller came so fast the coons scattered in all directions. In the excitement, a big one landed right on Old Yeller's back, and he whirled around and around to shake it off.

Travis laughed. "We sure taught them coons a good lesson, boy!" he said.

Travis and Old Yeller came to be good friends as they guarded the corn night after night. Then Rose, one of the milk cows, disappeared for three days.

"She must have hid out somewhere and had her calf," Travis told his mother.

He and Old Yeller searched for hours before they found her. She had a calf, all right, but when Travis tried to pick it up the cow charged him.

Old Yeller came in like a streak and threw the cow to the ground. Again she charged, and again the dog threw her.

Travis could hardly believe it. Only the very best of the Texas cow dogs could throw a big cow like that.





When Travis tried to milk Rose that night in the corral, she kicked the bucket out of his hand. His mother looked surprised when he called the dog.

"All-right, Yeller," he said. "Hold her there."

Old Yeller stopped in front of the cow, watching her. She stared back, so frightened she didn't dare try any more of her tricks. Travis had no trouble milking her.

"Why, I never saw such a dog," said his mother.

"You'll never see another one like him," said Travis proudly, for by now he was sure they had the best dog in all Texas.



Then one day a man named Sanderson came looking for Old Yeller. He said it was his dog. But when he tried to take it away, Arliss threw stones and made his horse buck so hard Sanderson fell off. Because Sanderson was a very nice man, he traded Old Yeller for the only thing Arliss had—a big horned toad.

Sanderson told Travis there were many animals around with a sickness called hydrophobia.

“How can you tell if they got it?” asked Travis.

“They go crazy before they die. Watch for foam at the mouth. If some animal comes at you, shoot quick. If it gets one bite at you, you’ll get the sickness. And then no one can help you.”

Travis didn't have much chance to worry about hydrophobia, for it was hog-marking time. All the baby pigs had to be caught and marked on their ears so that everyone would know who owned them. It was dangerous work. The hogs ran wild, and would try to kill any man or beast that bothered them.

When Travis found their hogs, he climbed out on the branch of a tree and had Old Yeller drive the herd right under him. Then he lassoed the little ones and hauled them up one at a time to be marked.

All at once the branch broke under his weight. Down he fell—right on the backs of the angry hogs.





As he scrambled to his feet, a hog charged and ripped his leg with its sharp tusk. Then, suddenly, Old Yeller was there beside him, fighting off the hogs.

Travis ran. At a safe distance he stopped to rest. He noticed that everything had become quiet. He couldn't hear Old Yeller and the hogs any more.

"Yeller!" he called. There was no answer.

Had Old Yeller been killed? Travis hurried back to the tree, limping on his cut leg. The hogs were gone. He heard a whine, and found the dog in a rocky cave. It was badly cut up. Tears filled the boy's eyes as he ripped up his shirt and bandaged the dog's wounds.

Several hours later, buzzards were wheeling in the sky above the cave when Travis returned with his mother.

She gasped. "Oh, Travis! I didn't know he was cut up so bad."

"Them hogs never would have touched him, only he was keeping 'em off me," he said.

His mother sewed up Old Yeller's wounds and wrapped him in fresh bandages. Then they made a kind of stretcher for him between two long drag-poles behind Jumper, the mule. And Arliss sat with the dog and kept him company all the way home.



Travis and Old Yeller had to stay in bed with their wounds for the next few days. Lisbeth came over to help with the work. She brought a yellow pup with her, and offered it to Travis.

"One of Miss Prissy's pups," she said.

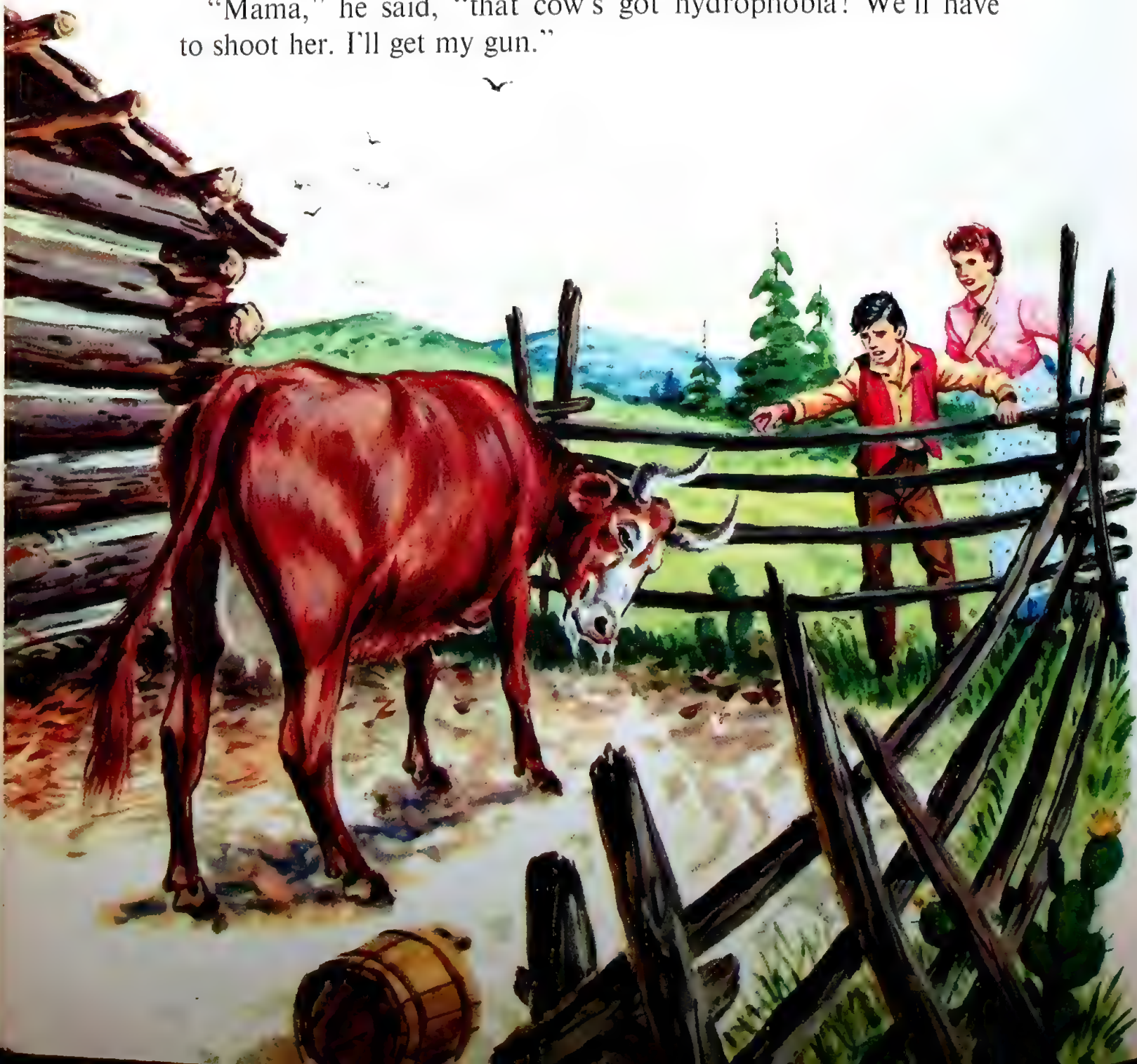
"We've got Old Yeller," said Travis, refusing to take it.

Lisbeth was so disappointed she ran from the room.

When Rose, the cow, became ill a few days later, Travis and his mother went out to look at her. She was staggering around, and drooling at the mouth.

Travis felt a cold chill go through him.

"Mama," he said, "that cow's got hydrophobia! We'll have to shoot her. I'll get my gun."





From the cabin door that evening Travis could see the red glow of a fire some distance away.

"How come you shot Rose?" Arliss asked him.

"Because she was sick."

Arliss played with the pup for a while, then asked, "Why are Mama and Lisbeth burning the cow?"

"So animals won't eat her meat and get sick too," he answered.

"You get washed up now and I'll fix you some supper."

Travis had just given his brother a bowl of corn bread and milk when he heard the most awful yelps and snarls.

"Travis!" screamed his mother. "Travis! Bring the gun!"



Jumper galloped past in a broken harness as Travis ran toward the fire. His mother and Lisbeth were hanging onto each other, staring in horror at the animals fighting beyond the flames.

One was Old Yeller. The other was the biggest gray wolf Travis had ever seen. They were moving too fast for him to take aim.

Suddenly they rolled in the dirt. The wolf caught Old Yeller by the throat and hung on, rolling the helpless dog on its back. Travis saw his chance. He took careful aim, and squeezed the trigger.

Pulling Old Yeller from under the dead wolf, Travis examined him carefully.



"He ain't bad hurt, Mama," he said.

"It happened so fast," said his mother. "The wolf leaped at Lisbeth. Lucky I had a stick in my hand."

"Lucky you had Old Yeller," said Travis.

"Lucky for us, son," she said softly. "It wasn't lucky for Old Yeller. No wolf in its right mind would jump us so near the fire. That wolf had the sickness."

Travis stared at her. He couldn't speak.

She said, "I'll shoot him if you can't."

"We don't know for certain!" he cried. "He just saved your life, Mama! We'll—we'll shut him up in the corn crib. Then wait and see. Maybe he won't get the sickness."

Old Yeller still seemed all right after two weeks in the corn crib. Travis was beginning to have hope. But then one night as he went to feed the dog it growled savagely.

"How is he tonight?" his mother asked when he came in.

"No one would feel good locked up all the time," he snapped.

Arliss yelled, "You ain't going to keep Yeller in that old crib any more!"

Travis grabbed his brother and shook him hard. "You stay away from that dog, you hear?"

Arliss made so much fuss his mother sent him to bed. But no one saw him slip out of the cabin and head for the corn crib. Old Yeller growled at him.

"That's all right, boy," Arliss said. "I'll get you out of there."

He wasn't tall enough to open the door, so he stood on a feed trough. He still couldn't quite reach the latch.





"Arliss!" called his mother. "Arliss!"

He could hear her coming. Quickly, he lifted a flat rock onto the trough and climbed up on it. Standing on tiptoe, he reached the latch and pushed it up.

His mother came running. The door swung open. She slammed it closed just as the savage dog charged against it.

Travis reached the crib just in time to see his mother drag his screaming brother toward the cabin. He could hear the terrible growls of the mad dog. Then he saw his mother coming back with the rifle. He tried to take it from her, but she jerked it away.

"Travis! You know we've got to!" she said.

"I know, Mama," he said in a low voice. "I'll do it. He was as much my dog as Arliss's."

Tears streamed down his mother's cheeks as she gave him the gun. The rest was like a bad dream. He hardly knew what he was doing until the shot roared in his ears.



The next day their father came home from his long trip with presents for everyone. He found Travis on North Hill beside a new grave, and gave him a gray pony. But Travis couldn't speak. He kept looking at the grave.

"Your Mama told me about the dog," said his father. "I'm mighty proud you acted like a real man. The thing to do now is try to forget."

"I'll—I'll never forget," said Travis.

"Maybe it's not a thing you can forget. But when you start looking around for something good to take the place of the bad, you can usually find it."

As he and his father came home, Travis saw the pup dragging a big chunk of meat from the kitchen. His mother came after it with a broom. The pup rolled over and howled. But it still hung onto the meat. It was acting just like Old Yeller!

Travis picked it up. "It's about time to start teachin' this old pup to earn his keep," he said.

His father grinned. "He's hardly big enough to learn yet."

"He's big enough to learn—if he's big enough to act like Old Yeller," Travis said with a grin.

Then everybody was smiling. Even Lisbeth was happy, because at last Travis had accepted the pup she had given him.

